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ABSTRACT

Even Start programs integrate early childhood education, adult literacy or basic education, parenting education and support, and parent and child time to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy. This report describes the Even Start program in Colorado, and includes evaluation questions and methods. The report presents evaluation findings from the second year of implementation of a system of coordinated local evaluations, with both quantitative results and family stories to illustrate the educational and self-sufficiency gains made by Even Start families. The report includes a cost-benefit analysis comparing the cost of providing Even Start services to the amount of money saved by a decrease in educational and social services needed by and provided to families, and to increased tax revenues from parents' employment. Key findings of the program evaluations include: (1) the number of families served by Even Start increased by 56 percent; (2) 61 percent of families speak English as a second language; (3) 100 percent of teen parents enrolled as seniors in high school graduated, compared to a 72 percent graduation rate for all Colorado seniors; (4) 38 percent of all parents seeking a GED or high school diploma achieved their goal; (5) 57 percent of ESL parents advanced in their English skills; (6) 82 percent of infants and toddlers and 85 percent of preschoolers were functioning at age-appropriate levels of development; (7) 74 percent of primary school children demonstrated academic performance that was at or above their grade level; and (8) 39 percent of parents improved their employment status. The report concludes with recommendations for future steps toward improving Even Start in Colorado. Statistics from the Colorado Even Start 1998-99 Progress Report are appended. (EV)

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Colorado Even Start

1998-1999 Progress Report

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Yolanda's Story (in her own words)

My name is Yolanda. I began the **Even Start** program in September of 1995. Before I came to **Even Start** I really didn't have any kind of inspiration or goals in my life. I knew in my heart I wanted to go back to school since I had to drop out in the sixth grade due to the fact that I was pregnant. I really thought going back to school was out of my reach since my children were too young to start school and I didn't have a way to pay a babysitter. As far as I was concerned school wasn't a reality for me.

When I started the **Even Start** program it wasn't of my own free will. Social services had given me no choice. When I first started my classes I knew I would enjoy it here. My children loved the classes as much as I did. It was not only educational, but fun as well. I learned many things here at **Even Start**, not only how to be a better parent but also a better student. They also helped me prepare for my GED test which I completed with flying colors after being here only two months. After I received my GED I went to college for two years. Within those two years I stayed actively involved in the **Even Start** program and not because anyone made me. Although I have completed all my classes needed to receive my degree, I am currently working for a doctor as a Chiropractic Assistant and Office Manager. Thanks to the **Even Start** program, I can honestly say I have done more with my life than I ever thought I would.

I could never really express how thankful I am to the **Even Start** program and all the wonderful women who do such a great job at being mentors, as well as friends. I could only say, "Thank you." I know they will help put many other young mothers on the road to being great parents as well as great and motivated students.

The Meza Family's Story

When we started home visits, Mr. Meza was greatly involved in doing activities with his seven children. In fact, the entire family was very involved. Mr. Meza describes his experiences with home visits: "As a father, I am able to do things with my kids that my father wasn't able to do with me. My wife and I both come from farming families. The work was long and hard and our parents viewed book learning as the school's job. Neither my wife or I had a chance to finish elementary school. We have a good time when the teacher comes over to the house [for the **Even Start** home visits]. The games involve everyone. We like to see our kids learning and helping each other."

During the home visits the person who consistently was reluctant, in fact, was Mrs. Meza. She was afraid that her children would not understand and that the visits would reveal her own fear of not understanding. When the children would make a mistake, she would tell them, "You are a donkey!" and "You'll never get it." This attitude and feeling decreased as she got involved in parent trainings. She says, "I noticed that when we were all working together other kids did things that my kid does. I learned that every child learns differently and they learn certain things depending on how old they are. I thought that all kids learned the same."

In the later part of the year, Mr. Meza developed an oral tumor. Mrs. Meza really took charge of taking care of her family. She, on her own, decided to enroll in GED and English classes. All seven children are doing well and will be attending Migrant Summer School.

These stories illustrate changes in the lives of Colorado **Even Start** families. This Progress Report contains other such stories, as well as information on educational and self-sufficiency gains made by **Even Start** families. It includes a cost-benefit analysis comparing the expense of providing **Even Start** services to the money saved through reductions in the educational and social services accessed by families, and to increased tax revenues from parents' employment. The report ends with a broad look at the information presented and provides key findings for 1998-99 **Even Start** in Colorado.

COLORADO EVEN START
1998-99 Progress Report

Prepared by Beckie Anderson
for the Colorado Department of Education

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Background

The purpose of **Even Start** is to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the educational opportunities for low-income families. **Even Start** programs integrate four components to create a unified family literacy program: early childhood education, adult literacy or basic education, parenting education and support, and parent and child time together.

Even Start is funded through the U.S. Department of Education under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I. Title I is the largest federally funded program designed to provide educational services for elementary and secondary students. Title I, Part A funds are allocated to school districts based on a formula which includes the number of children in the district from low-income families. Within districts, services are provided to students based on educational need.

Title I, Part B funds **Even Start**. These monies are allocated to state governments and then distributed to local programs through competitive grants. In Colorado, **Even Start** is administered by a state coordinator, housed in the Center for At-Risk Education in the Colorado Department of Education.

Even Start programs often operate in collaboration with school-based Title I programs due to their common goal of providing educational services. In schoolwide Title I programs, where funds are used to support learning for all children in a school, family literacy services are often part of the school's redesigned educational plan. This year, Colorado **Even Start** programs were integral components of 15 Title I schoolwide initiatives.

Colorado's State Legislature passed the Colorado Basic Literacy Act in 1996. Within the requirements of this act, Individual Literacy Plans (ILPs) must be jointly formulated by parents, teachers, and principals for children in the primary grades (K-3) who are not reading at grade level. **Even Start** staff members across the state are assisting school districts with the implementation of this act and the development of ILPs. When **Even Start** children are not reading at grade level, **Even Start** personnel help school staff and parents in creating the requisite ILP, and become part of the resources required by the action plan.

The most common type of **Even Start** program in Colorado is center-based, meaning that families come to a location, such as a school, to participate. A typical "literacy session" in a center-based program includes instruction time for adults in adult basic education (ABE), General Equivalence Degree (GED) preparation,

English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, or job skills training. Adults also participate in parenting education and support. Usually during the adult education time, the children are participating in early childhood education (ECE) activities. Early childhood options range from children learning and interacting with each other in a preschool setting to the provision of homework help for children in the primary grades. At some point during the session, parents and children join each other. This parent and child together (PACT) time is often held in the early childhood room and can include activities initiated by the child. Literacy sessions are usually held several times a week during the day or in the evening depending on the needs of the participating families.

Many of the Colorado **Even Start** program staff conduct home visits in order to provide literacy activities and support custom-designed for individual families. If home visits are done in conjunction with center-based programs, they are typically scheduled once a month. In other programs, home visits are the primary way in which the program staff provides literacy services for families. Programs serving teen parents enrolled in high school may also vary from the center-based approach. These programs often include a parenting class which the teens take for high-school credit. PACT can be part of this class or part of a home visitation component. Adult education is provided through the high-school courses in which the teen parent is enrolled.

*Colorado **Even Start** Programs*

During 1998-99, the Colorado Department of Education funded eleven **Even Start** programs. This number is almost double the six programs that were funded in 1997-98. The 1998-99 **Even Start** programs are located in Windsor, Commerce City, North Denver, Southwest Denver, Colorado Springs, Trinidad, Westcliffe, Alamosa/San Luis Valley, Durango, Cortez, and Glenwood Springs/Roaring Fork Valley. The following paragraphs give a brief description of each of these programs.

The Windsor Family Literacy Program received a planning grant in 1996-97 and is in its second year as a fully funded **Even Start** program. Headed by the Windsor School District (Weld County School District RE-4), the Windsor Family Literacy Program serves families in collaboration with Right to Read of Weld County. The main program site is in Tozer Primary School. The nearby Mountain View Elementary School and the Windsor Public Library are also used for adult education classes.

The Commerce City **Even Start** is in its first year as a fully funded program. Led by Adams County School District 14, this program operates in partnership with the Region II Migrant Education Program. Center-based services are provided at Adams City High School. Home visits are also an integral part of this program.

The Metropolitan State College - Quigg Newton/Focus Points **Even Start** Program received a planning grant during the 1997-98 year, and in 1998-99 was awarded an implementation grant. Focus Points Family

Resource Center oversees this program in collaboration with Metropolitan State College of Denver. This initiative provides home-based family literacy services in two north Denver neighborhoods with housing projects: Quigg Newton Homes and Five Points/Curtis Park.

The Southwest Family Literacy **Even Start** Program operated a pilot program last year with a planning grant. This year the program received an implementation grant, with Mile High United Way serving as the fiscal agent in partnership with the Denver Public Schools/Family Resource Schools. Staff members provide family literacy services at two public schools in southwest Denver: Munroe Elementary and Rishel Middle School.

The Colorado Springs program, El Paso County Centers for Family Learning, is in the third year of serving families through **Even Start** funding. El Paso County School District #11 collaborates with El Paso County School District #2 and the Community Partnership for Child Development (Head Start and the Colorado Preschool Program). These partners operate family literacy programs at Hunt Elementary School (District 11), Sand Creek Elementary and Stratmoor Hills Elementary Schools (District 2), and the Community Partnership for Child Development facility.

The Custer County Family Literacy Program in Westcliffe received a planning grant in 1997-98 and an implementation grant this year. The program is headed by Custer County School District C-1 in conjunction with the West Custer County Library District. The main program activities are held in space in the library facility.

Trinidad State Junior College **Even Start**, located in Trinidad, has been an **Even Start**

program for six years. Trinidad State Junior College (TSJC) oversees this program in collaboration with Las Animas County School District #1 and serves families at TSJC and at the community center in Aguilar, a small town outside of Trinidad. Teen parents are served at the Trinidad Alternative High School.

The San Luis Valley **Even Start** Program, La Llave, received a six-month planning grant and a six-month implementation grant in 1997-98. This is the program's first year with a full-implementation grant, overseen by the Alamosa School District in partnership with the Alamosa campus of Trinidad State Junior College. Services for La Llave are provided mainly through home visits. There are also center-based services available in three San Luis Valley communities served by **Even Start**. In the town

of San Luis, program services are provided at Centennial School and El Convento (part of the community Catholic parish). In Alamosa, families can participate in the program at the **Even Start**/La Llave center, while Monte Vista families come to the Delta Alternative Education Center for **Even Start** services.

Southern Ute Community Action Program (SUCAP) has served families through **Even Start** for six years. La Plata County School District #9 collaborates with SUCAP to provide family literacy services. Program sites are located at Fort-Lewis Mesa Elementary School in a rural area outside of Durango, and at Park Elementary School and Entrada Alternative High School in Durango.

The Pinon Project in Cortez had an **Even Start** planning grant in 1997-98 which funded a pilot family literacy program in Cortez. This year, program coordinators received an implementation grant headed by the Pinon Project in partnership with the Southwest Board of Cooperative Services Adult Education Program. Services are provided at the Tree House Development Center in Cortez, and at the Teddy Bear Preschool and at the Public Library facility in Dolores.

The Roaring Fork Valley **Even Start** Program, based in Glenwood Springs, has served families for two years. Colorado Mountain College is the fiscal agent in collaboration with Roaring Fork School District RE-1. Program sites are located at Basalt Middle School in Basalt, Carbondale Middle School in Carbondale, and Colorado Mountain College and Glenwood Springs Elementary School in Glenwood Springs. Home-based services also are provided to homebound families in the county.

It is important to keep in mind that six of the eleven **Even Start** programs contributing to this report have just completed their first year. D. Powell (1994) states, "The program implementation literature indicates that new family support programs require enormous amounts of time to reach a stable level of operation, generally from one to three years" (p. 462). Because so many of the **Even Start** programs funded this year are new, data in this report will be presented in two ways: gains of participants in all programs and gains of those participants in mature programs (in operation for two years or more).

Evaluation Questions and Methods

Questions for looking at progress for Colorado **Even Start** families were developed within the context of the national **Even Start** evaluation and local program evaluations. The *Colorado*

***Even Start** Progress Report* attempts to compliment the national **Even Start** evaluation rather than repeat it on a smaller scale. For example, this year the Progress Report includes only those families who have participated in thirty hours or more of **Even Start** core services. The national evaluation includes all families who enroll in the program. This *Colorado **Even Start** Progress Report* offers comparisons between participant gains within mature programs and gains within all programs. It also provides an analysis of program expenses and benefits based on the cost of providing social services and public education in Colorado.

The Progress Report was designed to present a picture of what families in Colorado **Even Start** programs have accomplished over the past year. This information supplements the local evaluation reports, which focus on the quality of individual programs. The data in this report focus on participant progress and include a cost-benefit analysis.

Local Program Evaluations

For the second year, local evaluations of Colorado **Even Start** programs were coordinated through a statewide system. The following question guided this process:

- How can local programs effectively support families in meeting education and self-sufficiency goals?

*The Guide to Quality: **Even Start** Family Literacy Programs* (Dwyer, 1997) was used as the key document for defining the standards of effective **Even Start** programs.

Programs are assigned to be evaluated on an alternating-year schedule. This year three mature programs (Colorado Springs, Trinidad, and Durango) and three new programs (Commerce City, Westcliffe, and Cortez) participated in local evaluations.

Peer assistance teams are a key feature of the local evaluation process. These three-person teams consist of the independent evaluator and a coordinator from each of two other Colorado **Even Start** programs. Coordinators from **Even Start** programs not receiving a local evaluation participated twice as members of a peer assistance team. The same evaluator coordinated these teams and served as a team member for each local evaluation conducted this year.

The main evaluation activity for peer assistance teams is a two-day site visit. During the visit, team members observe program operations and conduct focus groups with participants, staff, and sometimes with collaborators. The site visit also involves informal discussion and problem-solving with staff and team members. At the end of the visit, the team rates the program on two or three components, identified by the staff, using the rating scales in the *Guide to Quality: **Even Start** Family Literacy Programs*. Team members also synthesize the information gathered during the visit to develop commendations and recommendations. These are presented and discussed during a final meeting with the program staff.

As a follow-up to the site visit, the evaluator completes a report summarizing focus group and interview information, program observations, team ratings, participant success stories, and the commendations and

recommendations of the peer assistance team. Program staff and team members have the opportunity to review the report draft and negotiate changes with the evaluator, prior to the final report being sent to the Department of Education.

Benefits of using the peer assistance team process have been informally identified by participating staff members. Being a team member allows for a close analysis of an **Even Start** program, including the perspectives of staff members and participants. Informal discussions during the visit allow for shared learning. Both team and staff members typically walk away with new ideas and insight. The process also promotes the building of supportive relationships between staff members of different programs in order to strengthen the statewide **Even Start** network.

Colorado Even Start Progress Report

The following questions guided the design of the *Colorado **Even Start** Progress Report*. They are based on the goal of **Even Start** to expand educational opportunities of families and to break the cycle of poverty.

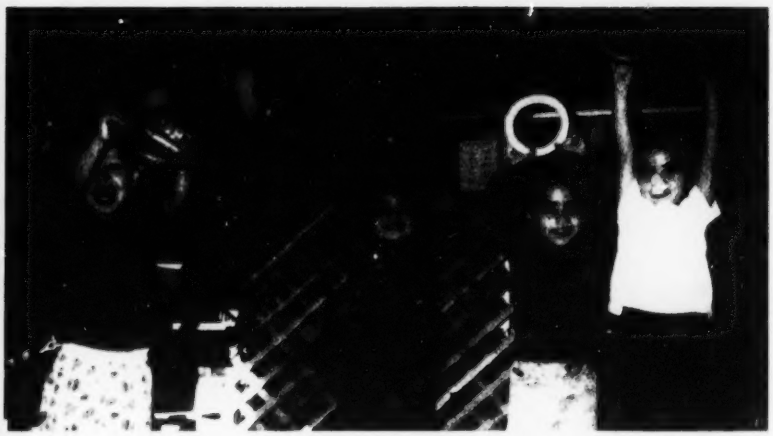
- What educational gains did adults achieve?
- What educational gains did children achieve?
- What self-sufficiency gains did families achieve?

To provide useful information to the state education agency and the local programs themselves, the report also addresses these questions:

- Who was served by **Even Start**?
- How often did families attend **Even Start** programming?
- What was the cost of serving families?
- What family changes resulted in tax-dollar savings through decreased dependence on educational and social services?
- What family changes in employment resulted in increased tax revenues?

The evaluator revised the data collection form used last year for the *Colorado **Even Start** Progress Report* and distributed it to program coordinators and to the state coordinator. The revised form was discussed during a coordinators' meeting; additional revisions were made to improve clarity based on the coordinators' review.

Program staff completed the forms in July of 1999 for families served during the 1998-99 program year. For the purposes of completing the progress report form, program coordinators were asked to include only those families who participated in 30 hours of **Even Start** programming. These hours were to include a minimum of seven hours of participation in each of the **Even Start** core services: adult education, early childhood education, parenting support, and PACT. This requirement is a change from last year's Progress Report, on which staff included families enrolled in their programs for one month or more.



Appendix - Colorado Progress Report Data Form is a copy of the 1998-99 data form and includes data totals for the eleven **Even Start** programs.

Colorado **Even Start** program coordinators were not required to use any common assessments for the purposes of this report. For example, programs were not asked to use the Preschool Inventory (PSI) to measure the educational gains of participating preschool children. Instead, staff members were asked to determine if the preschool children in their program were functioning at age-appropriate levels of development. The method by which age-appropriate levels were determined was left up to the local program staff.

Participant stories included in this report were written by **Even Start** staff with the exception of one story: *Yolanda's Story* was written by an **Even Start** participant.

Evaluation Results

The national **Even Start** evaluation reports consistently show that **Even Start** programs serve the intended population: under-educated, low-income families (St. Pierre, Swartz, Gamse, Murray, Deck & Nickel, 1995; Tao, Gamse & Tarr, 1998). These recognizable needs of participants (under-education and low-income) are addressed through the provision of core **Even Start** services: adult education, early childhood education, parenting support, and PACT.

It is important to acknowledge that **Even Start** does not provide these services in isolation; many factors come into play in relation to family change. This report reviews changes in Colorado families participating in **Even Start**, but does not suggest that **Even Start** is the sole reason for these family changes. Numerous supports, formal and informal, can work together for families. It is beyond the realm of this report to address all factors which could be influencing Colorado **Even Start** families. Family changes and progress reported here are based on the families' participation in **Even Start** as one form of support in their lives.

Who was served by Even Start in 1998-99?

May's Story

I had a mother coming to the program who was quiet and shy. She would not talk to anyone. She would come to evening classes after working all day in a hay field. She was a very good mother. She had two small boys and just hated leaving them with a babysitter. It took almost a whole day's wages just to pay for the babysitter for each evening. She told me it was worth it,... just hard to do emotionally, financially and physically. She almost always stayed late to talk to me. And she cried every time.

We went through her goals, short- and long-term. She wanted to get her GED and go to college. She also wanted to move from the area. Her ex-husband (who left her for another woman) lived in the same town and ignored their children. When he talked to her, he would tell her how happy he was with his new wife. Her whole life was in turmoil, and yet we sat down and wrote out some goals. Then together we attacked them, slowly but head on.

This mother utilized all aspects of the program. Every time she came, she took home the parent/child activities I developed for her to do with her boys. In fact, it was hard to keep up with her! During our counseling sessions she began to cry less and less. She started talking to the other mothers in the group and even set up a schedule to trade babysitting time with class time so it would not be so expensive.

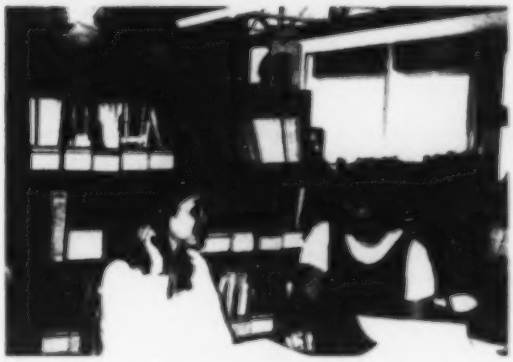
On October 28, 1998, only eight weeks into the program, she realized one of her goals and took a major step toward the other ones. She moved from the area, got an apartment, applied to take her GED exams, and applied to college!

Colorado **Even Start** programs served 403 families during the past year. This number is almost twice the 226 families served in 1997-98. Participating family members served this year included 458 adults, 250 infants and toddlers, 196 preschool children, and 151 children in the primary grades (K-3). Of the adults served, 17% were teen parents and 61% spoke English as a second language. The percent of ESL participants has almost doubled from last year when 34% of parents spoke English as a second language.

The most recent national statistics for **Even Start** report that 17% of all participants were teen parents; this figure is equal to the percentage of teen parents served in Colorado. Thirty-nine percent of the **Even Start** parents served nationally had limited or no English proficiency (Tao et al., 1998). The number of Colorado **Even Start** parents with limited English who participated is twice that of the national average.

How regularly did families attend Even Start programming?

More families had better participation this year as compared to last year. This year, almost half of the participating families (48%) attended 80% or more of **Even Start** core activities. Twenty-one percent participated in 70% of **Even Start** activities. Another 21% participated in 60% of **Even Start** activities. The 48% of families who took full advantage of **Even Start** with consistent attendance (80% or more) is up 18% from the number of families with this same level of attendance last year.



What educational gains were achieved by adults in Even Start?

Holly's Story

Holly is twenty years old and has two boys, ages four and two. She was referred to **Even Start** by Social Services. She joined the program in January 1998. At that time she was participating in Social Services programs such as food stamps, Medicaid, and money grants. She was fairly isolated from her friends and family. She was defensive and did not believe that anyone wanted to help her. Holly often "blew up" in class. Her anger was completely out of control. She was inattentive to her young boys and often corrected them harshly.

When she came to the Pinon Project she listed her goals as completing her GED, and receiving training in computer and office skills. Holly took a Love and Logic parenting class, and participated in the job readiness training program and in a basic computer class. She also attended anger management classes. By May of 1998 she earned her GED and completed job readiness training.

In May of 1998, Holly left Cortez to move to Arizona. In February of 1999, she returned to Cortez. She came back to the Pinon Project as a source of support for her and her sons. She was pregnant and due in May.

Holly started computer classes again and completed Certified Nursing Assistant training through JTPA [Job Training Partnership Act]. She still needs to take her state board exams to be certified, and will do final studying within the adult education program to assure that she has retained her learning. She is very proud of her work and says, "The Pinon Project has stuck by me when no one believed in me, but me."

Holly's goals remain essentially the same. She wants the skills to obtain a better life for herself and her family. She has found practical and emotional help through our programs. She has become a much more optimistic person, has greater self-esteem, and has the potential to become a valuable member of our community. She gives credit to her own self-determination and the availability of programs to help her. Recently she took her oldest son to Child Find, at our suggestion. He is now receiving speech therapy at the Tree House. Holly is a much calmer, happier mom. She openly welcomes home visits and is interacting much more appropriately with her two young sons.

Parents attending Colorado **Even Start** programs achieved the following educational gains during the 1998-99 program year.

- Of all parents seeking a GED or enrolled as seniors in high school, 38% earned a GED or high school diploma.
- Within mature programs, of those parents seeking a GED or enrolled as seniors in high school, 47% earned a GED or high school diploma.

Of all parents working toward a GED:

- 47% advanced in ABE training (from beginning to intermediate ABE, or from ABE to GED preparation).
- 33% percent began taking sub-tests toward a GED.
- 32% percent earned a GED.

Of all teen parents enrolled in high school:

- 100% of the seniors graduated from high school.
- 90% of non-seniors stayed enrolled in high school.

Of all participating parents:

- 9% enrolled in higher education or a training program.
- 10% completed educational courses including job readiness, business skills, and computer training.

Of parents attending mature programs:

- 15% enrolled in higher education or training programs.

Combining the number of parents who earned a GED and the parents enrolled as seniors in high school, 38% achieved their goal. Examining parents seeking these goals within mature **Even Start** programs (in existence for two years or more), 47% of parents earned a GED or high school diploma. In one of the **Even Start** programs, three parents who earned a GED went on to complete a semester of college-level classes and passed a skills test to earn a high school diploma. This progression was possible through a special arrangement with the school district.

Five of the **Even Start** programs in Colorado served teen parents who were enrolled in high school. Of these parents, 90% stayed enrolled in high school. All the teen parents who were seniors graduated from high school.

Nine percent of **Even Start** parents subsequently enrolled in a higher education or training program after earning their GED or diploma. This figure is very close to the 10% of parents who pursued college or training last year.

All **Even Start** participants who speak English as a second language made the following educational gains.

- Of the parents working on improving their English skills, 57% progressed in English training (from beginning to intermediate, intermediate to advanced, or advanced to Adult Basic Education in English).
- Of the parents working to improve their English, 8% moved into Adult Basic Education to begin learning in English and working toward a GED.

The fifty-seven percent who moved from beginning to intermediate ESL, intermediate to advanced ESL, or from ESL to ABE represent a 36% increase over last year's figure for ESL educational gains. In addition, three percent of all **Even Start** parents working on English skills achieved a Colorado ESL level of competency and received a Colorado Certificate of Accomplishment. The requirements to earn this certificate are rigorous, involving the completion of tasks which demonstrate reading, writing, and oral language skills.

Within the mature programs, seven percent of ESL parents received a Colorado Certificate of Accomplishment. Other advancements by ESL parents in the mature programs were lower or equal to advancements by all ESL parents. These statistics are attributable to the fact that 65% of the ESL families were served by first-year programs.

Eight percent of all the ESL parents moved from ESL instruction to Adult Basic Education. Although it involves a small percentage of parents, this advancement is remarkable. It means that parents have attained a level of knowledge of the English language sufficient to allow them to study academic subjects in English.

What educational gains were achieved by children in Even Start?

Tamika's and Juwan's Story

Tamika is a continuing student in the program. She has made significant life-skills gains during the time she has been in the program, including finding stable employment and housing, which in turn led to her no longer receiving government assistance. Tamika's employment experience this year has included position advancement and a pay raise. She registered to vote and voted for the first time, has obtained a driver's license, and purchased a vehicle. Tamika has become more involved in her child's education and reads to her child more frequently.

Tamika has made significant academic gains during the program year. Her math skills have improved 1.5 grade levels as she has learned to work with fractions, decimals, and percentages. Her writing skills have also improved as she prepares to take the GED writing test. Upon completing her GED, Tamika plans to pursue college.

Tamika's son, Juwan, is 22-months old. He loves to climb, kick, throw a ball, jump and hop. Juwan now paints and scribbles for brief periods, demonstrating that his interest in fine motor activities has increased. Juwan's "jargon" is very expressive. Words and short phrases are becoming recognizable. He often seeks to communicate with other children and enjoys engaging them in interactive play. Juwan is so involved in class that he no longer asks for his bottle or blanket.

Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers participating in all **Even Start** programs demonstrated the following educational gains:

- 82% of infants and toddlers (ages birth to 3 years) were functioning at age-appropriate levels of development.
- 85% of preschoolers (ages 3 to 5 years) were functioning at age-appropriate levels of development.

The percentage of **Even Start** preschoolers functioning at age-appropriate levels (85%) has increased dramatically in comparison to last year when 45% of preschoolers were functioning at age-appropriate levels. Eighty-two percent of infants and toddlers were functioning at age-appropriate levels this year. Information on infants and toddlers was not gathered last year, and thus no comparison can be made.

Primary-age children served by all **Even Start** programs achieved the following educational gains:

- 74% of children in the primary grades (kindergarten through third grade) demonstrated academic performance that was at or above their grade level.
- 93% of children in the primary grades (K-3) passed to the next grade level.
- 75% of children in the primary grades attended school 80% or more of the time.
- 85% of children attended school 60% or more of the time.

The 74% of **Even Start** primary-age children whose performance was at or above grade level shows an increase over last year, when 67% were working at or above grade level. The number of children passed to the next grade (93%) decreased slightly this year as compared to last year's figure of 100%. Three-fourths of **Even Start** children attended school 80% or more of the time.

Children whose families participate in **Even Start** are automatically eligible for Title I school services. Typically, these services include support in reading and math. Many of the elementary schools which Colorado **Even Start** children attend have schoolwide Title I programs. This designation means that individual children are not categorized in order to obtain support services, and that all children

in the school receive the benefit of Title I funds (e.g., Title I funds may be used to hire additional teachers for classrooms, to pay for professional development activities, and/or to provide additional resources and materials). When schools use a schoolwide model, there is no way to determine if **Even Start** children are in need of extra educational support.

The other model for providing Title I services in a school is referred to as targeted assistance. With this method, children needing additional support are identified and services are provided to only these children. Of the **Even Start** children attending targeted assistance schools, 26 were not identified as needing Title I services. In other words, 20% of **Even Start** children eligible for Title I services at schools with targeted assistance programs did not need Title I services.

- Of all the **Even Start** children attending Title I targeted assistance schools, 20% did not receive Title I services.
- Of the children participating in mature programs, 57% of those attending targeted assistance schools did not receive Title I services.

Finally, **Even Start** children demonstrated gains in reading. Forty-three children, mostly those in first grade, moved from being non-readers to reading independently. These children represent 28% of the total number of children served in the primary grades (K-3), many of whom were already reading independently.

What self-sufficiency gains were accomplished by families in Even Start?

Katy's and Nathan's Story

Katy started her senior year in high school and soon realized she was pregnant. She began taking parenting classes at the Teen Parenting Center at Entrada while continuing her high-school education. She also became involved in working at the childcare center one class period a day. Katy worked hard to learn all she could about pregnancy and her new baby. She struggled with pregnancy, school, and her relationship with the baby's father.

Nathan was born in April and Katy graduated from high school in May. She felt strongly about breast-feeding Nathan and arranged her life accordingly. With the help of her mom, Katy was able to stay home with Nathan until August. She then took a part-time job to help support herself and her baby, but was able to continue breast-feeding. Throughout the year Katy has continued to use the center as a resource. She was having problems getting Nathan to sleep at night and came by for some advice. She received support and enough information to get her through a difficult time and to get Nathan to sleep. Katy says the program "has been a wonderful support system for me. When I started here I didn't have a clue. I wouldn't feel successful as a parent without this program."

Katy is now working as a receptionist at San Juan Basin Health with many possibilities for advancement. Nathan is a healthy, happy baby who still comes to the childcare center two days a week. Katy remains part of the Teen Parenting Center. Her loving commitment to her baby and her own success help other teen mothers see their own possibilities.

The following gains in self-sufficiency were accomplished by all **Even Start** families over the past year.

- 39% of parents improved their employment status (obtained part-time or full-time employment, a better job, or a promotion).

- ➢ 34% of the parents on public assistance reduced the amount they were receiving, or stopped receiving assistance altogether.
- ➢ 14% of families improved their housing.

Even Start program staff shared other ways in which families made meaningful gains.

- Parents read more to their children.
- Parents attended parent-teacher conferences and became more involved in their children's education.
- Families obtained library cards.
- Parents and children participated in library summer reading programs.
- Parents began working on citizenship, and some obtained citizenship.
- Parents obtained driver's licenses, completed tax returns, and registered to vote.
- One parent moved out of a relationship involving domestic violence.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

As **Even Start** families improve their education and workplace skills, they often become less dependent on social and educational services such as public assistance. These changes can be viewed as beneficial in and of themselves, since families are more self-sufficient and have more choices. These changes can also be seen as beneficial to society from an economic perspective: as families decrease their use of services, tax dollars are saved, and as parents increase or improve their level of employment, tax revenues increase.

Some of the decreased use of public services are unrelated to **Even Start**. For example, welfare reform laws have limited the time most families can receive public assistance. And, in some cases, a decreased dependency on services is not a positive change for families as when, for instance, a family stops receiving public assistance, and parents subsequently do not earn enough money to meet their family's basic needs. Similarly, employment is not always a positive change for families. For example, the mother of a newborn baby may want to care for her child rather than work and pay someone else to care for the child.

The tax savings and increased tax revenues outlined in this section are presented based on the premise that, the majority of the time, decreased dependence on public services and increased self-sufficiency through employment are benefits for families.

What was the cost of serving Even Start families for 1998-99?

As a federal program, **Even Start** funds are budgeted by Congress and administered by the U.S. Department of Education. The U.S. Department of Education provides state allocations for **Even Start**. The states oversee a

competitive grant process to award funding for local **Even Start** programs.

During 1998-99, the Colorado Department of Education disbursed a total of $1,080,158 to eleven community collaborations for developing and maintaining **Even Start** programs. Program coordinators typically combine **Even Start** dollars with other funds and in-kind donations to run their programs. In 1998-99, federal dollars for Colorado **Even Start** programs averaged $2,680 per family (last year's figure was $2,387). This number compares to a national average expenditure of $2,844 per family in 1996-97 (Tao et al., 1998).

What family changes resulted in tax-dollar savings through reduced dependence on educational and social services?

During this year, nine **Even Start** families stopped receiving public assistance. The average TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) payment to a Colorado family in 1999 was $339 per month[1]. This amount adds up to an annual savings of $36,612. Three families stopped receiving other forms of support, such as food stamps and child care assistance. An additional sixteen **Even Start** families reduced the amount of public assistance they were receiving this year.

Of the **Even Start** children eligible for Title I services in targeted assistance schools, 26 children did not receive Title I services this year. The average cost of providing Title I services to each child in Colorado during the 1997-98 school year was $901[2]. These 26 children who did not need services resulted in a savings of $23,426.

One **Even Start** child was removed from special education programs during this year, because such services were no longer needed. The average cost of providing special education services to a child in Colorado schools during 1996-97 was $4,833[3].

These dollar savings based on the **Even Start** families no longer receiving public assistance, and children no longer receiving Title I or special education services, add up to $64,871 for one year. See Table 1 for information on how these savings increase over several years.

There are other potential educational savings related to student retention which are not included in the savings calculations in order to provide conservative data. **Even Start** staff provide educational support to children from birth through the primary grades (K-3). They also assist parents in helping their own children in school. These services support at-risk children in achieving high standards, meeting grade-level expectations, and being passed onto the next grade. Retention costs can be estimated from the average annual per-pupil educational cost. For 1996-97, this cost in Colorado was $5,343 (the average amount a district spends on operational expenses to educate one student, not including transportation)[4]. Thus over $5,000 in tax revenue is saved for each child who advances to the next grade.

1 Statistics provided by the Colorado Department of Human Services
2 Statistics provided by the Colorado Department of Education
3 Statistics provided by the Colorado Department of Education
4 Statistics provided by the Colorado Department of Education

What family changes in employment resulted in increased tax revenues?

There are other financial benefits associated with Colorado **Even Start** families, related to their employment and subsequent increased tax revenues. **Even Start** programs support parents in obtaining jobs through education and job-skills training. When parents become employed, they begin to contribute taxes. In an estimate based on minimum wage, full-time employment, K. Lance (1998) estimates that the combined contribution of employer and employee to FICA taxes would be $1,576 annually (no income tax would be due on a minimum wage salary). Multiplying this tax revenue by the fifty-three **Even Start** parents who obtained full-time employment this year results in a total increased tax revenue of $83,528 for a single year (Although the salaries of employed parents are unknown, since some parents made more than minimum wage and paid more taxes, and some did not pay taxes, Lance considers this a conservative estimate).

The same estimates can be applied to the **Even Start** parents who gained part-time employment this year. Taking half the annual amount of FICA taxes ($788) and multiplying by the number of parents gaining part-time employment (75) equals an increased tax revenue of $59,100 (Although it is not known that all these parents worked 20 hours a week, since some worked more, and some made more than minimum wage, this is also considered a conservative estimate). Table 1 provides a compilation of the tax savings and increased tax revenues brought about by this year's **Even Start** families, over a seven-year period. The combined savings and revenues add up to a total of $207,499 for this year, an amount which is 19% of the 1998-99 federal **Even Start** allocation for Colorado.

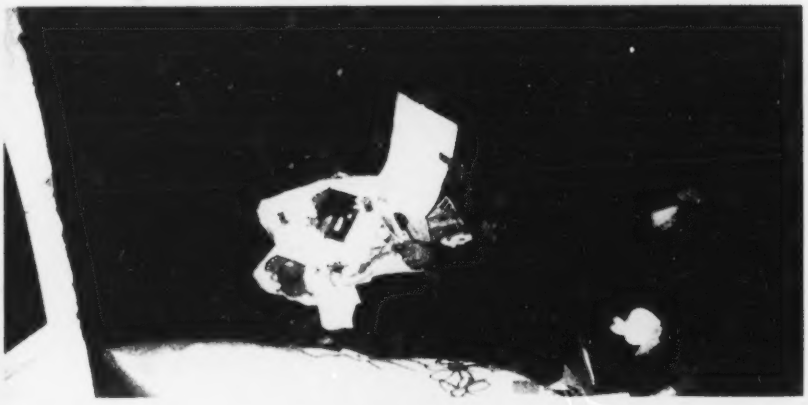
Table 1 Tax Benefits as a Result of Even Start Family Changes in 98-99

	Year 1	Year 3	Year 5	Year 7
TANF Savings	36,612	109,836	183,060	256,284
Educational Savings	28,259	84,777	141,295	197,813
Tax Revenues	142,628	427,884	713,140	998,396
TOTALS	**$207,499**	**$622,497**	**$1,037,495**	**$1,452,493**

Table 2 shows how the tax benefits from Table 1 compare to the cost of providing **Even Start** services. After five years, the savings add up to $1,037,495 which is 96% of this year's **Even Start** allocation. After seven years, the tax benefits, which were conservatively assessed, become greater than the cost of providing the program for a single year.

Table 2 Net Gain of Tax Benefits and Even Start Costs after 5 & 7 years

	Year 5	Year 7
Tax Benefits for 1998-99	1,037,495	1,452,493
Program Costs for 1998-99	1,080,158	1,080,158
NET GAIN	**- $42,663**	**+ $372,335**



Conclusion

The following key findings of this report are based on data from all the Colorado **Even Start** programs for 1998-99:

- The number of families served by **Even Start** this year increased by 56% as compared to last year.
- 61% of **Even Start** families speak English as a second language.
- 100% of **Even Start** teen parents enrolled as seniors in high school graduated as compared to a 72% graduation rate for all Colorado seniors.
- 38% of all **Even Start** parents seeking a GED or a high-school diploma achieved their goal.
- 57% of **Even Start** ESL parents advanced in their English skills.
- 82% of infants and toddlers (ages birth to 3 years) and 85% of preschoolers in **Even Start** were functioning at age-appropriate levels of development.
- 74% of **Even Start** children in the primary grades (K-3) demonstrated academic performance that was at or above their grade level.
- 39% of **Even Start** parents improved their employment status.

These findings demonstrate the benefit of **Even Start** to Colorado and to the more than 400 Colorado families who participated.

Now, over half of all **Even Start** parents speak English as a second language. Many of these parents are immigrants. With Colorado's booming economy and low unemployment rate, the need for an immigrant work force has been created. As immigrants come to our state to support the ski industry, tourism, and agriculture, and to hold other entry-level, minimum-wage positions, they often bring with them a need to learn English. This year, **Even Start** adult educators have helped over half of the ESL parents make significant advances with English skills.

Even Start staff members have been extremely effective in helping parents enrolled in high school to graduate. All **Even Start** parents who were seniors in high school graduated this year. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (1993), about 28% of all high-school students in Colorado drop out before graduating. In 1996, 25- to 34-year-olds who had dropped out of high school were nearly three times as likely as high school graduates with no college to receive public assistance (*The Condition of*

Education, 1998). **Even Start** adult educators assisted over one-third of parents seeking a GED to obtain their goal this year.

Even Start children are considered at-risk due to their parents' education levels and income. Andrew Hayes (1999) stated the following:

> *Children whose parents are undereducated are at grave risk of continuing the cycle of undereducation. Fewer of the children of undereducated parents are in preschool programs, and many more fail during the early school years and drop out before completing high school than do the children of more educated parents (p. 2).*

In spite of these risks, **Even Start** children in Colorado performed very well this year. Over 80% of infants, toddlers and preschoolers are doing what is expected at their age. Almost three-quarters of **Even Start** primary-age children demonstrated appropriate grade-level skills or better.

Finally, **Even Start** staff have supported parents in obtaining employment through teaching business skills, providing computer training, and facilitating job readiness. Over one-third of **Even Start** parents have moved into the workforce or improved their employment status this year.

Steps Toward the Future

This year, the **Even Start** State Coordinator took several steps to improve the quality of **Even Start** programs in Colorado. In response to requests for training by local program coordinators, a trainer with many years of **Even Start** experience was employed to provide customized training for **Even Start** staff around the state. Personnel from the newly funded Colorado Migrant Education **Even Start** were also invited to participate in these trainings.

The ***1997-98 Colorado Even Start Progress Report*** put forward a recommendation that as local programs seek funding sources at the local level, so should state administrators seek additional monies. In January of 2000, federal funds will become available to states through the **Even Start** Family Literacy Initiative. It is recommended this year that the **Even Start** State Coordinator, through the Center for At-Risk Education (C.A.R.E.), apply for such funding. These monies could be used to continue to improve the quality of Colorado **Even Start** programs by supporting expansion, evaluation, planning, and additional training activities.

Specifically, a portion of the Initiative grant monies should be earmarked for training and implementation of a new evaluation system. This system, Results Mapping, will allow **Even Start** staff to more effectively track family progress and demonstrate program impact. Implementation of Results Mapping directly addresses a second recommendation of the ***1997-98 Colorado Even Start Progress Report***, that a common assessment tool designed for family literacy programs be used.

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Appendix

COLORADO EVEN START
1998-99 Progress Report

SUMMARY DATA

Number of families served this year (families receiving at least 30 hours of service, including a minimum of 7 hours of each: adult education, early childhood education, parenting support, and PACT): 403

Number of adults served: 458

Of the adult participants, how many are teen parents? 77

Of the adult participants, how many speak English as a second language? 281

Number of children served:

Infants/toddlers (ages birth-3) 250

Preschool age children (ages 3 to kindergarten) 196

Children in the primary grades (kindergarten to 3rd grade) 151

POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES

Indicate the number of families who achieved the following program attendance (count each family only once):

83 Participated in 60-69% of **Even Start** core activities

84 Participated in 70-79% of **Even Start** core activities

195 Participated in 80% or more of **Even Start** core activities

Indicate the number of parents who achieved the following educational outcomes during this program year:

[How many parents were working toward a GED? 161]

27 Moved from Beginning to Intermediate ABE*

49 Moved from Intermediate ABE to GED Preparation*

86 Began testing for the GED

52 Earned a GED

[How many teen parents were enrolled in high school? 36]

20 Stayed enrolled in high school

14 Graduated from high school

[How many parents were working on ESL skills? 246]

76 Moved from Beginning to Intermediate ESL*

43 Moved from Intermediate to Advanced ESL*

8 Achieved Colorado ESL level of competency (received Colorado Certificate of Accomplishment)

21 Moved from ESL to ABE

25 Enrolled in higher education

11 Enrolled in training program

46 Other (please specify): job readiness, computer & business skills training

- Beginning Adult Basic Education (ABE): 0-5.9
- Intermediate ABE: 6-8.9
- GED Preparation: 9.0+
- Beginning English as a Second Language (ESL): Instruction designed for adults who have limited or no proficiency in the English language. Instruction emphasizes listening and speaking.
- Intermediate ESL: Instruction designed for adults who have some competence in communicating in English. Instruction in reading and writing is introduced along with continued emphasis on speaking and listening.
- Advanced ESL: Instruction designed for adults who can communicate in English but who need instruction in usage. Emphasis is placed on idioms, language for specific purposes, and grammatical structure. Reading and writing are integrated with speaking and listening.

Indicate the number of children who achieved the following educational outcomes during this program year:

206 Infants and toddlers functioning at age-appropriate levels of development

166 Preschoolers functioning at age-appropriate levels of development

111 Primary (K-3) children working at or above grade-level

43 Moved from being a non-reader to reading independently

[How many children were eligible for Title I (those attending Title I Targeted Assistance schools)? 131]

26 Did **not** receive Title I services (children attending Title I Targeted Assistance schools)

For Primary (K-3) children only (count each child only once):

5 Attended public school 60-69% of the time

10 Attended public school 70-79% of the time

114 Attended public school 80% or more of the time

129 Passed to the next grade level

[Does your district(s) pass all students? 10 programs responded "no", 1 program responded "usually"]

Indicate the number of participants who achieved the following self-sufficiency outcomes during this program year:

[How many families received public assistance (TANF)? 82]

16 Reduced public assistance (TANF)

9 Stopped receiving public assistance (TANF)

3 Stopped receiving other forms of assistance (please specify): food stamps, child care assistance

0 Child(ren) returned to parents from foster placement

75 Obtained part-time employment

53 Obtained full-time employment

53 Improved employment status (promotion, raise, better job)

4 Obtained citizenship

20 Obtained a drivers license

0 Entered a branch of the armed services

55 Improved housing

List other self-sufficiency outcomes and the number of participants who achieved them:

80 Obtained a library card

34 Increased involvement in child's education

33 Attended parent-teacher conferences

24 Read more to their child(ren)

24 Accessed immigration services

19 Read out loud to their child(ren)

13 Improved parenting skills

8 Participated in library's summer reading program

8 Asked more of their community

5 Began work on obtaining citizenship

2 Completed a tax return

2 Registered to vote

1 Moved out of a domestic violence situation

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